

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NIGERIAN NATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY IN NSUKKA EDUCATION ZONE

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to find out strategies for effective implementation of the National Language policy in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State Nigeria three research questions were formulated to guide the study. The study also adopted a descriptive research survey A sample of sixty teachers were drawn randomly using simple random sampling technique from a population of two hundred and fifteen teachers (215) in Nsukka education Zone. A four point scale involving strongly. Agree (SA) 4 points, Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (D) 2points and Disagree (SD) I point was used to determine acceptance or rejection of statements by the respondents. Any weighted mean response up to 2.50 is considered as accepted by the respondents otherwise rejected the data collected were analyzed using frequency and mean ratings. Results of the study amongst others revealed that there is a dearth of trained indigenous language teachers for the effective implementation of the language policy in primary schools in Nsukka education zone. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations were proffered which included that government should ensure the training and retraining of teachers of Nigerian languages through scholarships, workshops, seminars, conferences and in-service programmes.

KEYWORDS: Language Policy, Random Sampling Technique, Data Collected, Scholarships, Workshops, Seminars, Conferencesss.

INTRODUCTION

Formal western education was introduced into Nigeria by Christian missionaries for more than four decades, the outcome of education was left entirely to the missionaries Taiwo, (1994), Fafuwa, (1974). Those missionaries believed that the African child would be best taught in his native language and secondly that the interest of Christianity would be best served by actually propagating the religion in indigenous languages. Thus the teaching and learning of indigenous languages received much genuine attention in those days. This approach however, was not accepted by everybody especially the elites, who were of the view that the products of such education were not suited for the job market of those days Taiwo, (1980). Those with reasonable Command of the English language were in high demand. As a result of this, the government began, as from the early 1960's to gradually intervene in Education of the country with a view to according English a lot more prominence. Over time, the education policy on language initiated by the government so succeeded that interest in language education shifted very much away from indigenous language towards English, the language of the colonial masters. As these ideas took strong hold in the country, the wisdom of giving English so much importance in government and education began to be gradually questioned. Thus, some people felt, and openly canvassed in parliament for English to be replaced as official language by one of the indigenous languages Bamgbose, (1967). It was then advised that more effort should be put into the teaching of the major indigenous languages to enable them serve as an alternative to English as official means of communication in government and business. Osaji, (1979).

The basic aim of these suggestions and pressures was to cause an important shift in the attitude of government especially at the federal level to the indigenous languages, namely, that language is simultaneously a vehicle for a peoples culture and a means of maintaining and preserving that culture indefinitely. By implication the government came to see and appreciate that if Nigeria was not to ultimately loose its national identity along with the indigenous languages there was an urgent need to re-position the status of the indigenous languages. In realization of this fact, the government also came to see the indigenous languages more clearly for what they had been all along, viz, a veritable and practical means of communication, some of which could very easily be harnessed for effecting national integration which is a matter of paramount importance for a country still struggling to consolidate its independence. These considerations are explicitly spelt out in section one, paragraph eight of the National policy on education which is a document that contains the general objectives, philosophy goals and aims of education in the country. NPE, (2004) for a better understanding of the issues involved in the implementation of the language policy, it is pertinent to consider complete exposition of the text.

The National policy on Education revised (2004) advocates the use of the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community as medium of instruction in early formal education. It also requires that every Nigerian child should learn one of the three major languages in addition to his own language and English which the policy insists will be taught by specialist teachers of English.

Omamor, (1984) states that the 1981 revision of the 1977 policy statement in outlining the importance of language in the educational process describes it as a means of preserving the people's culture, stressing in the process, the necessity in the interest of national unity, that each child be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages, ie (Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba) other than his own mother tongue.

The statement then proceeds to provide a detailed breakdown of the policy objective that government will seek to achieve at the different levels of education in the post 1981 period, as well as the strategies for achieving these goals and the implementation implications.

Adjimola, (2008) affirms that what eventually emerged as Nigeria's language policy in education comprised provision made in National Policy on Education for Language as media of instruction and subjects of study in content at the various levels of the educational system.

The National Policy on language recognizes multilingual policy as it provides for

- Mother tongue and/or language of the immediate community as the language of initial literacy at foundation levels and adult and non-formal education
- Three major national languages Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba at secondary school level as (language of national culture and integration)
- English the official language of literacy, the bureaucracy, and the law court medium of instruction in secondary and higher education levels
- Selected foreign language French and Arabic as the language of international communication and discourse (NPE, 1981; 9-10)

From the above statements emphasis is laid on the place of language in the educational process, as a means of preserving the peoples, culture, and integration. Nevertheless, its implementation is yet to be materialized because of its

internal problems.

Akere (1998) contends that inspite of the comprehensiveness of language policy provisions; the languages, situations in Nigeria educational system remain confusing. The major problem according to him has been the lack of seriousness on the part of Nigerians to fully support and implement its own policies. Banjo (1985) highlights some of the problems surrounding effective implementations of the policy as follows:

- Inadequate production of books and other teaching materials and trained teachers to deal with every Nigerian Language
- Disordered nature in which the various languages referred to in the policy statement are introduced into the curriculum
- The non provision of up-to date descriptions of every Nigerian Language from which will flow the necessary teaching materials and the publication of books, and
- The non development of suitable literature to not only sustain, but also raise the level of literacy acquired in the indigenous languages

Bamgbose (1980) provides details as to all the work that would have to be done in the way of providing basic linguistic descriptions practical grammars, standard or the graphics, text books, dictionaries and guides as well as manuals for adequately trained teachers if we are ever to achieve effective implementation of the policy with some degree of systematicity.

In view of the various issues raised so far in this study. It is clear that the national language policy is full of fundamental flaws. Many researchers collaborate this view Bamgbose, (1980), Chumbow, (1986) and Emenanjo, (1985). These researchers identified the flaws in its implementation at different levels of education. This paper addresses the problem of what strategies could be adopted for effective implementation of the National language policy in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu state Nigeria.

Three research questions were formulated to guide the study

- How adequate is the provision of resources for the implementation of the language policy?
- What extent of awareness has been created by government on the implementation of the language policy?
- To what extent does the attitude of Nigerians affect the effective implementation of the language policy?

METHODS

This study is a descriptive survey design sought to determine the effective strategies for the effective implementation of the Nigerian National Language Policy, in primary and secondary schools in Nsukka Education zone of Enugu State Nigeria. The zone was chosen because of the homogeneity of the language group in the area. Most residents in the area are Igbo with different dialectical backgrounds. Three local government areas make of the education Zone. A simple random sampling technique was used to select a total of sixty language teachers out of ??? that made up the population. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire. The questionnaire was a structured four point grade of strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A) Disagree (D) and strongly Disagree (SD). Data collected were analyzed using frequency

and mean ratings. A mean point of 2.50 was regarded as positive and accepted, while any point below 2.5 mean point was taken as a negative response and rejected.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

How adequate is the provision of personnel for the implementation of the national language policy.

Table 1: Mean Scores of Teachers on Provision of Adequate Personnel for Implementation of the National Language Policy

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
1	The government made adequate provision for specialists in the three indigenous language Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba	3	2	40	15	2.15	Rejected
2	Government through conference and workshops re-train personnel for proper implementation of the languages policy	1	2	7	50	1.23	Rejected
3	Government provides scholarships for undergraduates studying indigenous languages in Nigerian Universities	1	1	8	50	1.22	Rejected
4	There is a good number of qualified and trained language teachers for the successful implementation of the language policy in Nsukka education zone	5	10	20	25	1.95	Rejected

Table 1 above shows that government did not make adequate arrangements to employ the indigenous language teachers. Even those serving are not given opportunity through conferences, workshops and seminars to update their knowledge. All the four items responded in table one had a mean average below the mark point of 2.50 and are therefore rejected.

Research Question 2

To what extent has awareness been created by government on the implementation of the language policy?

Table 2: Teachers Mean Rating on the Extent of Awareness on the Implementation of the National language Policy

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
1	Most language teachers are ignorant of the aim and objectives of the national language policy	40	5	10	5	3.33	Accepted
2	Government has through public enlightenment campaign educated the public on the need for promotion of indigenous languages through the schools.	10	2	8	40	1.70	Rejected
3	Stake-holders in education like the PTA partner with government for effective implementation of the language policy.	5	7	22	26	1.85	Rejected

In table 2 there is evidence from the respondents on all the items that both the implementers of the language policy and the populace have no knowledge of the need and how the policy should be implemented in schools because of lack of enlightenment by government. All the items scored below the 2.50 except item No 1.

Research Question 3: To what extent does the attitude of Nigerians affect the effective implementation of the language policy?

**Table 3: Teachers Mean Rating on the Attitude of Nigerians
Affect the Effective Implementation of Language Policy**

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
1	The indigenous language are rated as inferior to the English language by Nigerians	20	26	10	4	2.87	Accepted
2	Some public and private primary and secondary schools ban learners from speaking the indigenous languages in schools	42	10	5	3	3.52	Accepted
3	Multi-ethnic rivalry among language groups without standard autography against the implementation of the three major Nigerian languages,	10	12	10		2.93	Accepted

Table 3 shows the opinion of respondents on the attitude of Nigerians to the implementation of the national language policy. All the three items on the table is rated high above 2.5 This shows that the respondents agree that there is a very negative attitude of Nigerians towards the use of indigenous language hence the none and haphazard implementation of the policy.

DISCUSSIONS

Information collected from respondents for this study revealed the following.

There is a dearth of trained indigenous language teachers for the effective implementation of the language policy in schools in Nsukka Education zone Okafor (1989) affirms this when he noted that one of the greatest problems facing the teaching of indigenous Nigerian language is the scanty number of qualified teachers in the different language areas. It is also worthy of note that without specialists in these language areas, curriculum developers and prerequisite materials with which to train in the area, no language policy formulated in Nigeria can be effectively implemented.

It was also found that no seminars conferences or workshops were organized to update the knowledge of language teachers in the field as implementers of the policy about details of the language policy. There is also a general consensus by the respondents that Yoruba and Hausa languages are not being taught at all in the secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone. This situation completely defeats the purpose and the stipulations of the language policy.

The study also found that both teachers and students are not particularly interested in the teaching and learning of the indigenous languages. Moreso most of the Nigerian Languages don't have a standard orthography, as a result there are hardly text books available for the teaching of the languages.

As regards the attitude of Nigerians to indigenous Nigerian languages, the study found from the respondents that most Nigerians have no regard for their languages. They rather give more attention and respect to the English language which they believe strongly is the only mark of literacy. The indigenous language Igbo is not used in Nsukka Education Zone as a medium of instruction as a result of this strong believe in the inferiority of the language and the superiority of the English language. Emenanjo, (2008) affirms, that the Igbo language for instance is not being seriously and consistently used as a medium of instruction in the lower primary level or is it taught as compulsory subject at the upper primary level in Imo State. Afigbo (1973) believes that the indifferent, attitude that Nigerians have towards their language is largely responsible for the lowly placed status of the education system.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is in recognition of the potency of mother tongue in education that the national policy on education prescribed the mother tongue and /or languages of the immediate community as the medium of instruction in lower primary NPE

(1977, 1981, 1998 and 2004).

It also shows that government realize the role of indigenous language in the development of any nation. For educational system to be established on a stronger foundation, the indigenous languages must be developed and utilized especially at the foundation level of educational institution. The result of Ife project carried out by Fafunwa (1976) affirms the use of mother tongue as a better option for language of instructions throughout the primary school level.

Presently the English language is used as the official language of formal literacy. This state of the art has bedeviled the true implementation of mother tongue initial literacy. Adjimola (2010) affirms that English continues to reflect its dominant the dominate role as an official language, the medium of teaching and learning, commerce and technology above all language of interethnic communication. This study has identified that the poor implementation of the language policy is to be attributed to;

The position of the English language as a vehicle of communication and a core subject in the school curriculum.

- The negative attitude of Nigerians to the indigenous languages
- Inadequacy of trained specialists in the language areas
- Linguistic heterogeneity in Nigeria and inherent antagonism among deferent language groups in Nigeria

In view of these findings among others, the following recommendations are proffered to enhance the implementation of the policy.

- The federal government has a big role to play in the implementation of its policies. It is not enough to make policy statement without enforcing them or taking definite steps for its implementation.
- Government has to embark on mass orientation to enlighten the public on the importance of mother tongue education particularly at the primary and junior secondary school levels.
- There is urgent need for teachers and textual materials in all indigenous languages especially the less developed ones.
- Government should ensure the training and retraining of teachers of Nigerian languages through scholarships, workshops, seminars, conferences and in-service programmes
- The Federal and State Government Education agencies should develop orthographies, meta language curricular and other literacy materials especially in non major Nigerian languages to help them develop.

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